

deny them coverage and by potential employers to deny them employment.

To put it bluntly, we will never unlock the true promise and benefits of sequencing the human genetic code if Americans are too paranoid to get tested.

Currently, Federal and State laws offer only a patchwork of protection against the misuse of genetic information. In addition, some States have enacted legislation on discrimination in health insurance and/or genetic discrimination in the workplace. Despite the presence of these State laws, only comprehensive Federal legislation can guarantee everyone in the United States protection from genetic discrimination.

That is why I, along with the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER), the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY), and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ESHOO), have introduced this legislation. No one should be afraid to take advantage of the latest science to protect their health or that of their families. It is exactly the same bill that our colleagues in the Senate passed without objection, and it is strongly supported by the administration.

The bill provides commonsense protections for both consumers and companies. It contains protections against frivolous lawsuits with unlimited damages, but at the same time ensures that an individual's private, personal genetic information cannot be used against them. For example, employers cannot fire someone because they are more likely to develop a genetic disorder. Nor can they require employees to undergo genetic testing. At the same time, employers cannot be sued simply because of so-called "water cooler gossip" about an individual's condition that may or may not be true.

Under this bill, health insurance companies cannot deny coverage or charge a higher premium to a healthy individual based solely on genetic disposition to a disease or a disorder. Health insurance is expensive and hard enough to get for many Americans. Let us not make it more expensive based on factors beyond an individual's control.

As technology rapidly changes, so must Federal law. We must now act to protect our Federal investment in the human genome project. If individuals do not take advantage of the opportunities genetic research provides, we do not fully realize the return on our investment. This bill would allow them to do just that.

I am proud to introduce this legislation. I thank my colleagues who have worked so hard on it already: the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER), the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY), and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ESHOO). I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense and much-needed legislation.

CRACKING DOWN ON GANGS THAT TERRORIZE OUR COMMUNITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, last month I introduced with the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. BONO) the Gang Prevention and Effective Deterrence Act of 2005, a comprehensive bill to increase gang prosecution and prevention efforts. Our legislation is virtually identical to the Feinstein-Hatch bill that was reported out of the Senate Judiciary Committee in the 108th Congress and has since been reintroduced.

The number of gangs continues to grow in communities across the country with substantial increases in the numbers of cities and counties with gang problems between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s. Since my days as a Federal prosecutor in California, I have been increasingly concerned with the growing public safety threat posed by organized street gangs, and I have also seen the destructive impact that street gangs continue to have on families, on our youth, and on our communities.

In 2002, it was estimated that youth gangs were active in over 2,300 major cities across America, with a total of over 21,000 gangs and over 730,000 gang members. Gang activity is still, regrettably, on the rise.

The gang problem is no longer a local issue but a national one, requiring a national strategy. Our legislation is designed to facilitate this strategy by bringing together Federal, State, and local law enforcement, providing them with new tools to combat gang violence, making available new funds to keep kids out of gangs to begin with.

Street gangs are increasingly focusing on running full-service criminal enterprises in the neighborhoods where they reside, terrorizing those who live in the community. Some have shown increasing levels of sophistication, exhibiting characteristics common to organized crime, and will likely continue to expand their criminal enterprises in new ways and places throughout the country. This requires new and creative ways of attacking the problem.

In 2002, the city of L.A. announced that it would begin to go after gangs in the same way law enforcement brought down traditional organized crime figures, using the Federal racketeering statute RICO to its full capacity. These racketeering laws, however, were designed to prosecute organized crime with Mafia-style organizations in mind. The Gang Prevention and Effective Deterrence Act would create a similar tool, but tailored specifically to violent street gangs by criminalizing violent crimes in furtherance or in aid of criminal street gangs.

The most lucrative criminal enterprise for street gangs has been the retail distribution of illicit narcotics. Our legislation would attack this problem by making murder and other violent crimes committed in connection with drug trafficking a Federal crime.

Street gangs also engage in a host of other criminal endeavors. Gangs are responsible for a large portion of the violent offenses, and the use of firearms is a major feature of gang violence, with gang members far more likely than other delinquents to carry guns and to use them.

Our legislation increases penalties for criminal use of firearms in crimes of violence and drug trafficking. The bill also allows for the detention of persons charged with firearms offenses who have been previously convicted of crimes of violence or serious drug offenses.

Unfortunately, gangs have strong links to the youth in our country. The FBI reported that 819 juvenile gang killings occurred in 2003, up from 580 in 1999; and law enforcement reports the problem is getting worse.

Our youth are being held hostage by gangs. Gang involvement takes a heavy toll on adolescent development and life-course experiences.

In order to prosecute an entire gang, it is sometimes necessary to prosecute multiple defendants in the same case, including juvenile gang members. Our bill proposes a limited reform of the juvenile justice system to facilitate Federal prosecution of 16- and 17-year-old gang members who commit serious acts of violence.

Our legislation also provides more resources to bolster the fight against gangs and attack the problem at its roots, with \$650 million over 5 years to support Federal, State, and local law enforcement efforts, as well as intervention and prevention programs for at-risk youth.

Mr. Speaker, the time to crack down on the gang epidemic in our country is now, and I urge my colleagues to join the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. BONO) and me in this effort by cosponsoring this important legislation.

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PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise again today to talk about the issue of prescription drugs and the price that Americans pay relative to the rest of the industrialized world.

Now, I understand that we are a blessed country, and I understand that in many respects we as Americans should shoulder more of the burden than, for example, the people in Sub-Saharan Africa. But I do not think Americans ought to have to subsidize the starving Swiss.

Let me just show this chart, Mr. Speaker. These numbers are very recent in terms of the comparisons of what we pay in the United States for name-brand prescription drugs and what the people in Germany pay for